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ON ERICH FROMM: WHY HE LEFT THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

**by
CAROLINE KAMAU**

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ON ERICH FROMM: WHY HE LEFT THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

1. An Introduction and Biography

When Leo Lowenthal introduced the twenty-eight year old Fromm to Max Horkheimer, the latter was seeking a psychoanalyst to join the flourishing interdisciplinary Institute for Social Research (which we now call the Frankfurt School). Horkheimer had himself become intrigued by the subject after undergoing psychoanalysis in a bid to find a cure for his reliance on notes when public speaking. Horkheimer wanted the scholar to merge the then new psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud with the theories of Karl Marx. Fromm fit the bill. He was a bespectacled, shy thinker, fresh from psychoanalytic training in Munich and Berlin, and with the sort of interdisciplinary background that would enable him to undertake the challenge set by Horkheimer. Fromm joined the Institute in 1928.

No one could have predicted the catastrophic changes that occurred in Germany in the subsequent eleven years. There was war and the Holocaust, emigration, illness and relocation of the Institute from Frankfurt to Geneva then to New York. There arose chronic disagreements between Fromm and others in the Institute over Fromm's critique of orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis. There grew bitter antipathy between Fromm and a new, increasingly influential



member of the Institute: Theodore Adorno. There was controversy over a manuscript by Fromm, which Horkheimer declined to publish. Why did Erich Fromm leave the Frankfurt School? This chapter is a fresh discussion of Fromm's life and work, his time at the Frankfurt School, the reasons why he left, and the impact of the Frankfurt School on Fromm's thinking, with which he produced bestselling classics such as *The Art of Listening*, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* and *The Fear of Freedom*.

1a. The boy Erich

Erich Seligmann Fromm was born on March 23rd 1900, in Frankfurt, Germany. Fromm was the only child of Naphtali Fromm, a wine merchant, and Rosa Krause, a housewife, and they lived in the first floor of 27 Liebigstrasse, Frankfurt (Funk 2000). Fromm is thought to have mainly socialised with children from his extended family and, as an only child, Fromm viewed himself as the object of his parents' possessiveness. Fromm told his biographer, Funk, that the seeds of his interest in psychoanalysis were sown by a number of childhood experiences. For a start, he described his parents as neurotic people, telling his biographer Funk that his father was pathologically anxious and that his mother was a depressive (see also Fromm 1962a). Fromm said that his father felt ashamed of the materialism of his profession as a wine-merchant, and that his father felt inferior in comparison to his own siblings (one a doctor, one a lawyer). As for his mother, Fromm described her as "depressive, narcissistic and possessive" (Funk p 21), something which Fromm believed emerged from her lack of formal education and an overbearing focus on her role as a housewife and mother. However, Fromm later re-evaluated these harsh analyses of his parents, and he realized that his boyhood perception of his father varied somewhat from the reality of the man: "Later on I saw the picture was not as it first appeared. I was very fond of him and he was very fond of me" (Funk p 19).

In fact, Fromm's critiques of materialism can be said to have been inspired by his father since his father's shame about having an occupation whose primary concern was making money. Additionally, when Fromm was twelve, a man who worked in his father's wine shop taught him about socialism. Fromm therefore said that, even as a boy, he developed a dislike for material wealth: "I just couldn't understand a world in which making money was or should be the main occupation of people" (Funk, p 8). This critique of society's materialistic culture became a predominant theme in much of Fromm's writings. Fromm also acknowledged the idea that his parents' lack of psychological freedom was the source or catalyst for their neurosis. He noted that his mother was trapped in the role of a housewife raising her only child, and his father was stuck in a profession that he was ashamed of because it was at odds with his family's tradition of religious or scholarly occupations. This issue of freedom of the self is

central to most of Fromm's work as a scholar, and so his inference that the lack of freedom was the cause of his parents' neuroses may have been the genesis of his later interest in the topic.

Another formative childhood experience that Fromm later pinpointed as a reason for his interest in psychoanalysis was the suicide by a woman aged twenty-five. He was twelve years old at the time and said that he felt infatuated with her. The woman killed herself when her widowed father died. Her father was a man that Fromm had jealously disliked in the belief that he was the woman's main object of attention. The woman's stipulation that she wished to be buried with her father led Fromm to later ponder the oedipal nature of the situation. A psychoanalyst might likewise speculate on the significance of the boy Fromm's infatuation with a woman twice his age, and on whether anything can be deduced from the fact that three of Fromm's four significant romantic relationships involved women over ten years older than he.

Another childhood experience that Fromm's biographer Funk (2000) pinpointed was the war of 1914-18, when Fromm was transitioning from adolescence into young adulthood. Upon witnessing the destructiveness of war, Fromm (1962a) writes that he began to be sceptical about the world. This quality of scepticism is a quality fundamental to being a psychologist or psychoanalyst whose aim to answer the "why" and decipher the "what" of human behaviour. This questioning of the motives of human behaviour in war and this quality of scepticism, led Fromm to later develop a theory on personality and the psychological reasons for destructive human behaviour.

1b. Erich in his youth

According to Funk (2000), another experience that influenced Fromm's later thinking was that of being religious minority in Germany. Fromm's family had a history of religious practice. His great-grandfather, Rabbi Seligmann Bar Bemberger, was a Jewish scholar with fame across southern Germany. Erich Fromm spent much of his childhood studying the Talmud, a text central to the Orthodox Jewish faith, under the instruction of his uncle and others. It is said by Funk that the young Erich Fromm wished to further his study of the Talmud in Lithuania but his parents, being possessive, did not permit him. After attending *Wohlerschule* in the West End region of Frankfurt, Fromm was involved with a Zionist youth league between 1919 and 1923, whilst studying for a PhD in Sociology at the University of Heidelberg. Fromm's doctoral dissertation was on Jewish law and its relevance to social cohesion among Jews in the Diaspora. Even as a young adult, according to Fromm, his father continued to transfer his feelings of inferiority. For example, on the day of Fromm's doctoral viva, his father travelled to Heidelberg "...because he was afraid [Fromm] would not be received and that [Fromm] might commit suicide" (Funk p 17). Fromm successfully obtained

his doctorate. Around that time, he resigned from the Zionist youth league and later in his life expressed his dismay at the Zionist movement in Israel by writing "(It) lacks none of the evils inherent more or less in all states, precisely because they are based on powers" (Fromm, quoted in Funk p 108). In his later years he got involved with the movement promoting the rights of Palestinians. In summary, Fromm underwent a number of transformations during his late teens and early twenties. After completing his PhD in 1922, Fromm began to train as a psychoanalyst in Munich and Berlin. It is not clear, from his biographies, why Fromm decided to do this. Even though psychoanalysis, psychology and sociology (his PhD subject) are related fields, we can only speculate on why Fromm shifted disciplines.

1c. Erich becoming a psychoanalyst and a critic of psychoanalysis

At the time, psychoanalysis was a relatively new field predominantly centring on the clinical work, theories and writings of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis developed separately from the field of psychology, and the two fields were often in disagreement with each other. Freud was an influential figure in psychoanalysis, with a following in and outside the field. Nevertheless, by the time Fromm became a psychoanalyst, Freud's theories had a number of critics. Mainstream psychology, then dominated by the behaviourist paradigm, intensely criticised psychoanalytic theories. Other types of psychoanalysis were emerging.

With his wife Frieda Reichmann, Fromm co-opened a clinical practice applying Freudian psychoanalysis to Jewish patients. Fromm grew critical of Freud's theories, influenced by Georg Graddock, a sanatorium director who radically believed that every physical ailment had a psychological reason or meaning. Fromm became disillusioned with Freudian psychoanalysis and he began to question the field's disregard of sociological phenomena such as capitalism. In Fromm (1970), he expressed scepticism about the therapeutic value of psychoanalysis as it is commonly practiced and the effect of cultural factors on this. He believed that there was a kind of "unconscious collusion" (Fromm 1970 p 11) between the psychoanalyst and his/her patient, neither of whom expected much from psychoanalysis and the latter of whom chose psychoanalysis as a way of escaping the need to make life decisions or take risks by themselves. Fromm emphasised his belief that psychoanalysis can be useful, were it not for what Fromm called complacency by the psychoanalyst and a 'gentleman's agreement' between the psychoanalyst and his/her typically bourgeois client. This point is central to Fromm's later disagreement with Freudian psychoanalysis, since Fromm later argued that Freud had sold out the true potential of psychoanalysis by conforming to the cultural ideology of the middle and upper classes.

Another reason why Fromm was critical of Freudian psychoanalysis was that Fromm (1962a) accused Freud of behaving like a dogmatic leader of a movement and thereby choosing loyal followers incapable of criticising him and who were like "bureaucrats" (Fromm 1962a p 17). This was an example of Fromm's (1980) observation that critical thinking is itself not free from societal bonds such as what we conventionally call folk knowledge or culture and what Fromm calls social filters. In the case of Freud, Fromm (1970) questioned whether Freud's interpretation of clinical data was hampered by bourgeoisie attitudes, such as in his (Freud's) assumptions concerning male superiority. For instance, Fromm believed that Freudian psychoanalysis was restricted by patriarchal attitudes, such as in the construal of women as sexual objects that become procreating machines upon being conquered by a man. Additionally, Fromm believed that Freudian psychoanalysis was restricted by the idea that everything psychological has to have a material, or physical, root. Fromm further argued that Freudian psychoanalysis' emphasis on sexual drives as the root of psychological phenomena was an example of Freud being influenced by society's culture of materialism. For instance, Fromm argued that when Freudian psychoanalysis claims that a lack of satisfaction leads to neurosis it is implying that gratifying the self is "a condition of mental health" (Fromm, 1970, p 137). This, in Fromm's view, was another example of psychoanalysis implicitly endorsing a culture of consumerism.

Yet another reason why Fromm was critical of Freudian psychoanalysis was that he believed it was not sufficiently empirical. Fromm (1970) criticised Freud's theories for much the same reasons as the empiricist Karl Popper criticised psychoanalysis. For example, psychoanalysis is often accused of being unfalsifiable, meaning that the theoretical claims cannot be shown to be incorrect, often because observations are explained by untestable causes (e.g. the unconscious). Another reason why some psychoanalytic claims are deemed unfalsifiable is because 'immunizing treatments' are provided by other psychoanalytic claims, thus evidence contradicting one psychoanalytic claim can be repelled theoretically by invoking another psychoanalytic claim. As a hypothetical example, in psychoanalysis if a person has a dream about a subject, psychoanalysis may infer that it is because the person is expressing unconscious wishes for that subject. If a person does not have a dream about a subject, psychoanalysis may infer that it is because the person is repressing unconscious wishes for that subject. Therefore, the psychoanalytic claim of repression is used to immunize the psychoanalytic claim on dreams against being falsified – that is, to immunize it against being shown to be incorrect.

Fromm might have continued with the sole career of being a psychoanalyst, but Germany was then suffering hyperinflation. The clinic he had co-opened was suffering the effects of Germany's deteriorating economy. Fromm's practice partner Reichmann later said

“... we analyzed people [as compensation] for letting them work. I analyzed the housekeeper. I analyzed the cook.” (Reichmann, quoted in Funk 2000 p 60). They abandoned the clinic in 1928 due to financial difficulties. Fromm and Reichmann divorced later. From Burton (1991), we learn that Reichmann later gained fame in the US for pioneering a therapy for schizophrenia.

2. Fromm joins the Frankfurt School

Around 1928, Fromm began lecturing at the University of Frankfurt’s Institute for Social Research, renowned as the birthplace of Critical Theory. Fromm was introduced to a key figure within the School, Max Horkheimer, by Leo Lowenthal, who was also a member. Horkheimer had studied psychology before taking up philosophy but between psychology and psychoanalysis, it was psychoanalysis that Horkheimer held in higher esteem. One reason for this was that, as Funk (2000) reports, Horkheimer believed that psychology, a very young subject at the time, was worth little without psychoanalytic concepts. Horkheimer reportedly said “Psychology without libido is no Psychology” (quoted in Funk p 99). Horkheimer thus viewed psychology as being meaningless without psychoanalysis, and he reportedly viewed psychology’s importance within the social sciences as limited. Horkheimer was thus seeking a psychoanalyst to join the Institute and merge the subject with the Institute’s other disciplines – including history, philosophy and economics. This kind of inter-disciplinary approach was the hallmark of the Frankfurt School.

The fact that Fromm was a psychoanalyst critical of Freudian theory for being bourgeois meant that he fit the bill. He already had a critical approach to theory, and he subscribed to what can be called Marxist ideas. Additionally, Fromm’s idea of merging psychoanalysis with concepts from other disciplines was similar to the intentions of Max Horkheimer, who became the chair of the Frankfurt School later in 1930. Fromm’s integration of Marxism with psychoanalysis was, at the time, a groundbreaking and controversial approach from the perspective of mainstream psychoanalysts. Fromm’s ideas were a radical departure from the Freudian framework, which emphasises the internal and (in particular) the unconscious. Freudians could concede that external contextual factors such as that created by the family or the surrounding culture might have a bearing on the development of the ego. However, Freudian psychoanalysis did not concede that external factors such as economics play such a large role in the formation of the human psyche as Fromm was proposing.

At the same time, there is evidence that Fromm had early reservations about the Frankfurt School’s approach. Even though he was critical of psychoanalysis, Fromm still demonstrated loyalty for his field, and he felt that academics outside the field misunderstood

psychoanalysis. For instance, Fromm (1970) argued that philosophers such as Sartre, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno and others who tried to use psychoanalysis were limited in their understanding of the field because of “insufficient knowledge of its clinical basis” (Fromm 1970 p 27) and a lack of appreciation of the importance of empirical data in the development of psychoanalytic theory. We can therefore assume that Fromm, upon joining the Frankfurt School, had some reservations about his new colleagues’ intention to merge Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxist theory. In particular, Fromm (1962) suggested that the use of psychoanalytic theories in philosophy faces the danger of turning psychoanalytic concepts into metaphors generalised to society, or reducing psychoanalytic theories to allegories. Was this the beginning of Fromm’s disagreement with his peers at the Frankfurt School – that he was sceptical about their inter-disciplinary objective of applying psychoanalysis in a manner not reconcilable with psychoanalytic theory itself?

Another indication that Fromm had early misgivings about the approach of the Frankfurt School is Fromm’s (1970) suggestion that his colleagues there did not appreciate or accept his increasing empiricist leanings. This point is relevant to the earlier point noted – concerning Fromm’s fear that those in the Frankfurt School were misunderstanding psychoanalysis by regarding psychoanalytic concepts as allegories. Fromm viewed his practice and theorising as a psychoanalyst as something rooted in clinical observations – something rooted in empirical evidence. He therefore sought to advance empirical research whilst he was at the Frankfurt School.

2a. Fromm’s empirical work at the Frankfurt School

Fromm’s biographer Funk (2000) credits Fromm with being an important source of research ideas at the Frankfurt School and he credits Fromm as the originator of the notion of the authoritarian personality, a concept which the School continued to research for over 10 years. Fromm’s research on the authoritarian personality began when he embarked on a large-scale questionnaire study with Hilde Weiss, in the late 1920s. This study is reported in detail in Fromm (1984). The method of this study involved giving three thousand three hundred German workers questionnaires containing 641 questions, some open-ended some yes/no with the option to add comments, some factual (e.g. demographics), and some asking follow-up questions of previous questions. By 1931 they had received 1100 respondents’ questionnaires back. Participants were “ordinary” Germans and Fromm and Weiss wanted to know about many different aspects of their lifestyles and attitudes. Anonymity of the respondents was observed, implying reasonably reliable responses. The significance of this data and its timing

became clear after the data was collected since shortly after that Germany entered a period of severe tumult.

The fact that the data was collected shortly before the rise of the Nazis raised the question: could the data explain why the Germans succumbed to fascism? The Nazi party had won 24 seats in 1924, and 14 seats in 1928, but it was still regarded as a fringe political party. By the end of 1928, just when Fromm had joined the Frankfurt School, the Nazi party held a rally in Nuremberg and it was attended by approximately 60,000 members. In the year after that, 1929, the Nazi party had nearly 200,000 members and a ministerial post. By 1930, the party had 107 seats. Fromm and Weiss found that, at the time of data collection there were very few respondents who had voted for the National Socialists (the Nazi party): 17 out of the 584. Characteristics defining those in the study sample who had voted for the Nazi party and other far-right parties were defined by Fromm and Weiss as indicators of an authoritarian personality. Fromm and Weiss deduced that the authoritarian personality type can be defined by the following attitudes or behaviours: believing that government or leadership is the way to improve the world, believing that famous national leaders are the greatest personalities in history, believing that work is unavoidable, that foreigners or minorities are responsible for national economic problems, beliefs against women's equality, beliefs that corporate punishment of children is necessary, believing that the fate of a person is either his/her fault or the fault of higher powers, getting along better with superiors than with colleagues at work, and being unwilling to lend money or goods to friends. As well as that, those in the study sample who had voted for far-right parties held conventional tastes in home décor, plays and films.

Around the time of this empirical study, in 1931, Fromm suffered an onslaught of Tuberculosis and so he moved to Switzerland for convalescence. By that time, the Nazi party had 230 seats and by the subsequent year the party had formed the Gestapo and their first concentration camp. These sorts of events led many within the Frankfurt School to move to Switzerland in 1932. It was then that Fromm became a full time employee of the Institute. That year, 1932, the first issue of the Institute's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, was published and it included an essay by Fromm on historical materialism and psychoanalysis. This sort of critical approach was reflected in Fromm's articles on analytical social psychology, and the implications of psychoanalysis for social psychology.

Fromm began to research the idea (possibly rooted in emerging analyses from the large-scale study) that political stances, as such being left-wing, have unconscious motives. Shortly after, Fromm accepted an invitation from a well-known psychoanalyst, Karen Horney, to take up a guest lectureship position in Chicago (Funk 2000). Fromm is said by Funk to have had a romantic relationship with Horney, who was 15 years his senior, until 1943. When Fromm first

went to Chicago, his father died and Fromm decided to settle in the USA. Upon arriving in Chicago in 1937, Fromm explored whether a branch of the Institute could be opened or relocated in the USA. Funk reports that Fromm established contacts with various people that Horkheimer went to the USA to meet in 1934. Fromm returned to Europe in 1933 then emigrated to the USA on 24th May 1934, setting sail from Southampton, England.

The ISR relocated to Columbia University in New York in 1934. Nearly half of the questionnaires from Fromm and Weiss's study were lost amidst Fromm's and his colleagues' emigration to the USA. This left 584 questionnaires, but this was still a considerable large amount of data. Fromm and Weiss (see Fromm 1984) conducted some statistical tests such as correlational analysis, and they conducted a considerable amount of qualitative analysis of the data in a bid to psychoanalyse the responses. In those days, without computer spreadsheets, and without software enabling easier qualitative analysis, researchers had to analyse data manually. This made the process a very, very lengthy and laborious one for Fromm and Weiss. It took years. Deductions from Fromm and Weiss's large-scale study can tell us about the authoritarian personality, as described earlier. In fact, later work by Adorno et al. (1950) confirmed many of Fromm and Weiss's deductions concerning the personal characteristics of people who tend to support fascism.

2b. Controversy over Fromm's manuscript

The large-scale empirical study by Fromm and Weiss (see Fromm, 1984) was written up and Fromm expected it to be published by the Institute. However, we learn from Funk (2000) and other texts that Horkheimer and others within the Frankfurt School had misgivings about the manuscript. They argued that the sample of participants in the study who had voted for the Nazi party or other far-right parties was very small, and so Fromm's deductions about the authoritarian personality were based on a small proportion of the overall sample. Furthermore, Horkheimer et al. argued that the fact that such a large proportion of the original sample had declined to return their questionnaires, and the fact that nearly half of the returned questionnaires got lost, was an additional reason for caution in making deductions from the data. These seem like reasonable criticisms, considering that Fromm and Weiss were effectively making generalizations about the authoritarian personality based on 0.51% of the original sample and 2.9% of the available sample. Participants who had voted for other right-wing parties were also quite few, and therefore the total sample of right-wing participants was too low to enable legitimate comparisons with left-wing samples.

Furthermore, looking at the individual tables reporting data for each question from Fromm and Weiss (see Fromm 1984), the variations in responses according to respondents'

political orientation were not actually as simplistic as Fromm and Weiss's deductions implied. Their data can also not tell us why, later on, many of the people in their sample, just like many in the wider German population, supported fascism. In other words, many of the people who did *not* have authoritarian personality characteristics at the time of data collection *did* later support the Nazis and the question from a psychological standpoint is why. Today, it would be very interesting and very beneficial if Fromm and Weiss's data were subjected to statistical tests of significance that are substantially more sophisticated than those available at their time and that can give us a clearer indication of the commonalities between the right-wing and the left-wing samples' responses. Such tests would also tell us which indicators of authoritarian personality are more important than others.

Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and others therefore had valid reasons for being critical of Fromm's manuscript. They were reluctant to support publication of Fromm's manuscript. Whether the manuscript was so weak as not to warrant being published is another question, and Fromm may have been justified in feeling resentful about that – considering the ground-breaking nature, quantity and timing of the data. The manuscript reporting Fromm and Weiss's groundbreaking albeit methodologically flawed large-scale study was thus at the heart of Fromm's growing dissatisfaction with the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer reportedly "said that it could not be published because the Institute had no money for publication" (Funk 2000 p 91) but it is assumed that Horkheimer's decision was influenced by the fact that several members of the School were critical of the manuscript's scholarly merit. Burton (1991) argues that Fromm's colleagues at the Frankfurt School were not entirely neutral in their rejection of Fromm's manuscript. Horkheimer's and Adorno's "... apparent inability or refusal" (Burton p 110) to acknowledge that authoritarianism exists amongst the left-wing is said by Burton to be "... both odd and reprehensible" (p 110). Burton also speculates that Horkheimer and his colleagues' criticisms of Fromm's study lacked neutrality because they apparently had subsequent plans that did not include Fromm.

2c. Resentment and disagreements

Aside from the contentious manuscript, it is clear that another precursor to Fromm's departure from the Frankfurt School was the deterioration of his relationships with Horkheimer and others in the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer's decision not to publish the outcome of a few years' work most probably led Fromm to feel dissatisfied and resentful but there is evidence that there were other reasons for mutual resentment between Fromm and various members of the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer reportedly said of Fromm: "(Fromm) does not particularly appeal to me. He has productive ideas but he wants to be on good terms with too many people

at once... It is quite pleasant to talk to him but my impression is that it is quite pleasant for very many people." (cited in Wiggershaus 1995 p 162). Fromm reportedly viewed Horkheimer as a brother or father figure, but the relationship between them appeared to have remained formal, with Horkheimer reportedly addressing Fromm as 'dear Mr. Fromm'.

Additionally, Horkheimer had begun to resent Fromm's lengthy absences when the Institute relocated to the USA. Fromm's Tuberculosis relapses often compelled him to be absent from the Institute for long periods of time, such as when he was confined in a sanatorium in New Mexico, communicating with the Institute via letters. Fromm travelled to places with warm climates such as Bermuda, Mexico and the West Indies, since these climates were thought to be better for the recovery of his lungs. These trips and the lengthy absences contributed to strains in Horkheimer's relationship with Fromm. For instance, Horkheimer wrote, perhaps in frustration at what may have looked like wanderlust on Fromm's part: "Fromm has already covered half the continent" (Funk 2000 p 85). Funk also writes that in 1938 "Horkheimer wrote impatiently ... that Fromm had still not returned" (Funk p 85).

Around that time, in 1938, Fromm persuaded his mother to leave Germany, fearing that a war was impending. Fromm wrote to Horkheimer, asking to borrow \$500 from the Institute, part of the \$1000 needed as a deposit to enable his mother to leave Germany immediately. Funk writes that "Horkheimer immediately cabled back saying that the Institute had no more money for this purpose" (Funk 2000 p 49). Fromm was most probably very disappointed with this decision, and if we knew of no other disagreements between Fromm and the Frankfurt School we can ask whether it was a coincidence that Fromm disassociated from the Institute later that year of 1938. Fromm's mother eventually found refuge in England and went to New York in 1941, where she lived until her death in 1959.

It was in 1939, due to the emergence of new medication for Tuberculosis, that Fromm was cured of the disease. However, Fromm found that the Frankfurt School had changed – or at least that he no longer fitted in it. It is reported by Funk (2000) and Wiggershaus (1995) that the other reason for the Institute's growing detachment from him was fuelled by Fromm's attempt to publish a paper critiquing Freud's version of psychoanalysis. We have observed from previous sections that Fromm was critical of Freudian psychoanalysis since he himself became a psychoanalyst, and so it ought not to have been a point of contention – except for the fact that there were new members of the Frankfurt School, and some were loyal adherents of Freud's work. It was just then that Adorno, a new member, and Horkheimer, were beginning to express devotion to Freud and his theories. At the same time, and quite antithetically, Fromm had personal connections with dissidents of Freud such as Groddeck and Ferenczi, both of whom are said to have suffered attacks from "Freud's inner circle" (Funk p 212). This defence of his own allies, in addition to his criticisms of Freud's approach, spurred Fromm's increasingly

critical stance towards Freudian psychoanalysis. For instance, Fromm accused Freudian theories of having “bourgeois, authoritarian or patriarchal features” (Funk p 212). Wiggershaus reports that Adorno and Horkheimer were critical of one such article written by Fromm, and that Adorno wrote to Horkheimer complaining that Fromm’s article was sentimental, anarchic and Adorno said that Fromm’s article had forced him “in the paradoxical position of defending Freud” (Wiggershaus p 266). Furthermore, Adorno told Horkheimer that he viewed Fromm’s stance as one which compromised the ethos of the Institute’s journal. This was yet another precursor to Fromm’s eventual removal from the Institute. Funk reports that Fromm’s desire to critique Freudian psychoanalysis, to the extent of revising it, was something that the Institute “no longer felt able to support” (Funk p 76). Funk therefore surmises that Fromm’s criticism of Freudian psychoanalysis was something that contributed to Fromm’s later separation from the Institute.

We might speculate on whether Fromm projected paternalism into his relationship with Horkheimer, and therefore whether this explained his reaction to Horkheimer’s new protégé. Fromm is said to have developed a “marked aversion” (Funk 2000 p 97) towards Adorno. The animosity seems to have been mutual. Unfortunately for Fromm, perhaps because of his lengthy absences whilst ill, Horkheimer’s loyalty was for Adorno. Horkheimer reportedly liked Adorno’s “maliciously sharp eye for existing conditions” (cited in Wiggershaus 1995 p 162). Consequently, Adorno is said by Fromm’s biographer to have been pivotal in the Institute’s rejection of Fromm’s critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. Looking at essays by Frankfurt School members republished by Arato and Gebhardt (1978), it is clear that Fromm and Adorno continued to have starkly different views on psychoanalysis. As an example of the stark theoretical difference between Adorno’s (more orthodox Freudianism) and Fromm’s (unorthodox psychoanalysis), Adorno wrote an essay suggesting that a “libidinal bond” between people within the masses created a “libidinal pattern of fascism” (Arato and Gebhardt p 123). Let us remember that Fromm’s main disagreement with Freudian theory lay in his belief that Freudians put too much emphasis on sexual (libidinous) instincts as the basis of psychological attitudes and behaviour. It is also notable that Adorno’s essay displayed much support for orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic theories, and so it is unsurprising that this support for Freud worsened the already antagonistic relationship between himself and Fromm. Considering that Horkheimer held Adorno in such high esteem, it is possible that the dislike between Fromm and Adorno was the catalyst for the Institute’s rejection of Fromm and its termination of his contract. Bottomore (1984) likewise wrote that Fromm’s attempts to give psychoanalysis more sociological dimensions led to disagreements between Fromm and those within the Institute devoted to Freud’s version of psychoanalysis. Bottomore thus views this

disagreement as the reason why Fromm later “severed his connection with the Institute in 1939” (Bottomore p 14).

Burton (1991) reports that there were also “strong antipathies” (Burton p 18) between Fromm and Marcuse, just as there were between Fromm and Adorno. The reason for these antipathies, aside from theoretical disagreements, may have lain in stark differences in the personalities of Fromm’s colleagues, compared to his own. Knapp (1989) suggests that Fromm’s temperament, being “serious, unblinking” (Knapp p 36) contrasted with the temperaments of Adorno, Horkheimer and Pollock, which were “whimsical and caustically self-ironic” (Knapp p 36). Burton likewise suggests that Horkheimer and others in the Institute had become disillusioned with the prospect for social change as various political events unfolded, supporting Knapp’s description of them as hardening sceptics. In contrast to his colleagues’ growing pessimism, Burton suggests that Fromm held on to the original “optimism and sublimated messianism that accompanied the Institute’s inception” (Burton p 211). Whether we can take these criticisms by a proponent of Fromm at face value is debatable, just as we might scrutinise criticisms of Fromm by his opponents. It is more pragmatic to classify Knapp’s description of Horkheimer et al. as yet another example of the cliquey nature of academia, whereby camps of allegiance are formed around central figures. Fromm acknowledged the problems that this attitude created, when he viewed Freud as a kind of leader whose followers were unquestioningly devoted to.

In May 1939, the Institute’s financial director told Fromm that the Institute could no longer afford to pay his salary. Fromm is said to have received financial compensation, which was one year’s salary, and he was given the option of working at the Institute without a salary. His biographer, Funk (2000), calls the claims about limited finances a “pretext” (Funk p 98), suggesting that the Institute wished to discharge Fromm for other reasons. Knapp (1989) reports that Fromm, upon being told that the ISR could no longer afford to pay his salary, resigned.

2d. What was Fromm’s contribution to the Frankfurt School?

Fromm contributed to the Frankfurt School’s merging of Marxian theory with psychoanalytic theory. Fromm’s influence on the Frankfurt School, as a psychoanalyst, may have been to such a great extent that the School shifted more to the individual and his/her psychology than would have been the case without him. In fact, Bottomore (1984) sees this shift towards the individual as a source of the School’s eventual weakness, since he argues that the Frankfurt School began to neglect history, economics and other social factors despite these having been central to the concerns of the Institute at its inception. Bottomore argues that, in

later years, the Frankfurt School deviated so far from Marxian theory as to no longer qualify for an association with it. If indeed this charge is valid, some might hold Fromm responsible for influencing the Frankfurt School in shifting its focus to individual psychological factors substantially more than to social factors.

In terms of the particular psychical factors that the Frankfurt School tackled, under Fromm's influence, many agree that Fromm was responsible for pioneering work on the authoritarian personality. In the previous section we discussed Fromm and Weiss's study (see Fromm, 1984), whose method and findings undoubtedly spurred the School's subsequent research on the topic. Adorno et al.'s (1950) later research on the authoritarian personality later gained the Frankfurt School considerable recognition. Fromm's manuscript reporting the study was published by his estate after his death (see Fromm, 1984) and looking at the manuscript's deductions, it is evident that Fromm did indeed pioneer the School's ideas and work on the authoritarian personality. We can also see parallels between the questionnaire method used by Fromm and that used by Adorno et al. The very approach taken by Fromm – of psychoanalysing questionnaire data – is something that also inspired the approach of Adorno et al., who made deductions about the data's psychoanalytic meanings. Unfortunately, Fromm and Weiss's study is little known and Adorno et al.'s is widely cited in and outside psychology as a classic investigation into the causes of prejudice. Fromm and Weiss ought therefore to be cited or acknowledged as a precursor to Adorno et al.'s work on the authoritarian personality.

The Frankfurt School as whole is credited with pioneering what is called 'Critical Theory'. Fromm was pivotal in producing ideas that later influenced the critical psychology movement, one of the many offshoots of the critical theory tradition. Just as Fromm merged Marxian theory with psychoanalysis, so did early critical psychology merge Marxian theory with psychology. Just as Fromm was critical of psychology's scientific, quantitative approach to research, so is critical psychology critical of quantitative research and it is defined by a preference for qualitative research methods. Critical psychology adherents advocate qualitative research methods such as discourse analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Fromm was critical of psychology's desire to become a natural science, like chemistry, biology or physics, and he did not agree with mainstream psychology's view of the researcher as an independent observer or collector of facts. Like Fromm, critical psychology proponents tend to view the researcher as an active participant in interpreting data, and so they contend against the idea of objectivity in research. This qualitative approach is thus a central idea in critical psychology, which has emerged as an antithesis to mainstream psychology's empiricist quantitative approach. Therefore, as part of the Frankfurt School, Fromm contributed to critical theory's preferred research methods – with an emphasis on qualitative methods over quantitative ones.

As an example of how Fromm applied his views on the subjective aspects of psychological phenomena, Fromm (1980) suggested that "The words love, faith, courage, hate have an entirely subjective meaning for any individual..." (Fromm 1980 p 14). This view of psychological phenomena that focuses on individuals' interpretation of phenomena rather than the phenomena themselves differs from that of mainstream psychology, which defines itself as a science. Some therefore view the ideas of critical psychology as antithetical to and irreconcilable with those of mainstream psychology. As an analogy, let us imagine researcher X who focuses on individuals' subjective interpretation of a hot iron on their arm, and another researcher Z who focuses on the objective variables involved: the temperature of the iron, the properties of the wound *and* the individuals' subjective interpretations of the hot iron (reporting feelings of pain, yelling). We can liken the approach of researcher X to critical psychology, and the approach of researcher Z to mainstream psychology. Where the two become irreconcilable is in failing to agree on whether any given hot iron of a particular temperature has the same effect on feelings of pain in anyone, if all things creating error are eliminated and if confounding variables are held constant (e.g. subjective interpretation, pain thresholds, etc.).

The fact that the Frankfurt School preferred to create a theoretical blend using psychoanalytic theories per se, rather than the psychology theories of the time, can also be said to be a result of Fromm's influence as a psychoanalyst. As mentioned in an earlier section, Horkheimer already expressed a preference for psychoanalysis over psychology, and he believed that the latter field had few prospects. When Horkheimer found Fromm through Lowenthal, it was because he was specifically looking for a psychoanalyst to join the Frankfurt School. On mainstream Psychology's bid to establish itself among the natural sciences, Fromm told Evans (1966):

"I'm afraid colleagues (in psychology) sometimes are a little old-fashioned in their conception of science ... I could explain the scientific character of the psychoanalytical method more easily to a theoretical physicist or biologist than to many psychologists ... psychological research ... requires very strict and rigorous proofs" (Fromm, quoted in Evans 1966 p 78).

To psychologists critical of psychoanalysis, Fromm's idea of comparing psychoanalysis to theoretical physics is entirely reasonable, considering that physicists can theoretically 'prove' it possibly for an elephant to hang off a cliff supported by a daisy despite this claim being almost impossible to test empirically. Nonetheless, Fromm's scepticism about mainstream psychology no doubt fuelled the School's continued preference for psychoanalysis over

psychology. When Fromm left the Frankfurt School, he wrote many books expounding on his psychoanalytic theories.

3. Fromm post-Frankfurt School

After leaving the Frankfurt School, Fromm worked in academia whilst continuing to practice as a psychoanalyst. Across his academic career, Fromm worked in institutions such as Columbia University, Bennington College in Vermont, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and New York University. He published many books, several of which were national bestsellers to the extent that more lay people probably know Fromm for being a bestselling author than for his time at the Frankfurt School. He continued with the Frankfurt School's tradition of merging psychoanalysis or psychology with Marxist theory, philosophy and other disciplines.

3a. Fromm's first bestseller on the self and its freedom

Not long after leaving the institute, in 1942, Fromm published his first bestseller: *Fear of Freedom*, sometimes published under the title *Escape from Freedom*. In this book, Fromm (1942) considered the psychological properties of freedom – whether it is “...the absence of external pressure or ...the *presence* of something – and if so what?” (Fromm 1942 p 4). Fromm also acknowledged that some conceptualizations of “freedom” are limited by other conceptualizations of “freedom”. In addition, Fromm considered whether the freedom to give up freedom (e.g. in submission to fascism) can be realized through joining with “millions of others who share the feeling” (Fromm 1942 p 131). Furthermore, Fromm argued that the bid to control the self becomes a thing that curtails freedom and so Fromm argued that psychic acts are seldom truly free. In other words, the bid to impression-manage the self, even inwardly, so as to be one's own internal public relations controller, hampers freedom. In fact, Fromm believed that the pursuit of freedom is the root of all neuroses and also the root of the lack of neuroses. As well as the pressure that one puts upon oneself, the pressure put upon the self by others, such as through cultural demands, also curtails freedom. For the self to succeed in not feeling insignificant in the world, if feeling significant is part of feeling free, Fromm argued that the neurosis can be resolved by either ignoring the self or else ignoring the world. Fromm believed that most people do the former – they ignore the self, and so they cease to have independent opinions about anything, and only feel that an experience by the self is real only if the external world validates it. According to Fromm the external world tends to be the media,

and so “As a matter of fact, for many people an experience which they have had ... becomes real to them only after they have read about it in the newspaper” (Fromm 1942 p 165).

In this way Fromm (1942) captures a fundamental question in psychology – are thoughts in themselves evidence of something real (say a process in the brain) or are thoughts almost always a kind of PR to the self and to the external world? If not, are psychological theories ever about real things or about an oft misleading representation of that real thing? These questions highlight the central concerns of critical psychology, which is heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School and other critical theories. In relaying a well-known joke, Fromm captured the absurd inconsistencies that can arise within the self, as a result of contradictory representations of reality:

“A person who had borrowed a glass jar from a neighbour had broken it and, on being asked to return it, answered “In the first place, I have already returned it to you; in the second place, I never borrowed it from you; and in the third place it was already broken when you gave it to me.”” (Fromm 1942 p 167)

Fromm (1942) also argued that decisions concerning the self – be they so basic as to appear like innocent reflections of freedom – can themselves be mere conformity to convention. The ‘PR agent’ of the self is called a “pseudo-self” by Fromm (1942 p 175) and he further argued that the notion of individuality is often an illusion, especially considering the many times in history when people have readily violated that notion of individuality en masse. The consequences of that counterfeit self, the pseudo self, are such that even what might have been ‘real’ (the biological, for instance), becomes pseudo-real. There is evidence that this is possible. Recall the analogy of the hot iron on the arm of an individual. Research shows that, under hypnosis, some individuals, when told that an ice block (or something neutral) is a hot iron, have developed heat wounds (see Paul's, 1963, review of the evidence). This lends weight to the application of critical theory to understanding psychological phenomena.

Subsequent bestsellers expounded on this theme of the self and how it can achieve freedom, as outlined in *Fear of Freedom*. In the next section, we will explore the themes that run throughout Fromm's books, and discover that a predominant theme in Fromm's work is the issue of the self: self identity, self freedom and self realization. Landis and Tauber (1968) commend Fromm's idea that self identity, rather than instinct, is at the centre of human psychological attitudes and behaviour. We can therefore see that Fromm put into his theories the idea (formulated whilst working at the Frankfurt School) critiquing Freudian psychoanalysis for putting heavy emphasis on the notion of instincts.

3b. More bestsellers: the self and its societal neuroses

In *The Art of Listening*, Fromm (1994a) answered the ontological question that he posed earlier in *The Fear of Freedom*, concluding that freedom is not an entity that exists but a quality of personality, a kind of barrier: "Freedom is not something that we have. There is no such thing as freedom. Freedom is a quality of our own personality... (the capacity to be) free to resist pressure" (Fromm 1994a p 89). He recognised the adaptation needed by the self to the demands created by societal culture. Fromm viewed the becoming of the self as something that is entwined with what society demands from the self: "I assume we are what we have to be in accordance with the necessities of the society in which we live" (Fromm p 83). Later in the book Fromm suggested that this freedom is the key to resolving neuroses, which are psychological conflicts, since Fromm argued that freedom involves the capacity to objectively examine the self, to realize its flaws, and to not wrongly blame external causes for the neurosis. Without doing this, Fromm suggests that repression is in force – something that utilises energy which Fromm believes could be better utilised.

What are the symptoms of such neurosis, in Fromm's view? One symptom is materialism. Fromm (1994a) argued that to objectify an experience (e.g. to 'have a holiday') is to turn the experience into a property, and by thus doing one detaches their self from the experience. Fromm (1994b) expressed his dislike of the idea, in contemporary society, that almost every entity is for sale and he decried what he viewed as a decline in conviction amongst people. In Fromm's (1976) *To Have or to Be?* he considered how society's emphasis on 'having' leaks into everyday language. For instance, saying 'to have an education' suggests ownership of the entity, whereas – according to Fromm – one should emphasise the 'being', such as being learned. Fromm pinpointed the danger of defining the self through things: "*If I am what I have and if what I have is lost, who then am I?*" (Fromm 1926 p 109). Therefore, according to Fromm, 'being' is about experiences and these are unlike things because he believed that things are rigid and describable whereas experiences are not. These ideas illustrate Fromm's view that Freud was under bourgeoisie cultural influences and therefore that Fromm's own approach to psychoanalysis, influenced by Marxism, was intended as a remedy.

At the same time, Fromm (1981) acknowledged the challenge of attempting to merge psychoanalysis with Marxian theory. Since he believed that Freudian theory was influenced by "mechanistic materialism" (Fromm p 26), he may have wondered if psychoanalysis is fundamentally irreconcilable with Marxism. The merging was made all the more difficult by what Fromm observed when he said: "Marxists continued in the tradition of ignoring psychology" (Fromm p 26). Additionally, Fromm's take on Marxism had caveats. On socialism, Fromm (1988) held the belief that what should be shared with society is not so much personal

property as the propensity to produce capital. As an analogy, we can say that if one has a fruit tree, what Fromm expected to be shared was not so much the fruit, but seeds to give to others, so that they may then grow their own fruit trees. Fromm's take on socialism also consisted of believing that possession should be wholly functional and thereby directly beneficial to the self, rather than being a functionless symbol. These ideas can be said to have been rooted in Fromm's time at the Frankfurt School.

Another symptom of societal neurosis, in Fromm's view, is a preoccupation with the mundane. Fromm (1988) argued that triviality is the result of 'deadness' of the self, and that an example of trivial talk is talk about the mundane aspects of the self, the trivial day-to-day experiences. It is notable that this sort of triviality has become the norm with advancements in technology, and expanded use of the internet, allowing people to broadcast mundane details to others via social networking sites. It was interesting that Fromm pinpointed the collusion that exists between people in their perpetuation of triviality, so that talking about trivial things becomes a perverse validation of being. Fromm summarizes that sort of trivial talk thus: "As long as I talk, I know I exist; that I am not nobody ..." (Fromm 1988 p 23). In the modern context, the proliferation of 'talking' about the self via social networking websites may be an attempt by many to validate their selves. Fromm espoused withdrawing from trivial people, and in so doing expressing one's freedom.

Fromm theorized on the symptoms of societal neurosis both as though they are held by individuals and also as though they are held collectively by a society. For instance, Fromm (1970) described the 20th century as an "age of anxiety ... (that) produced ever-increasing loneliness and isolation" (Fromm 1970 p 10) and he believed that this was the reason why psychoanalysis became so successful in the 20th century. Fromm (1957) believed that the root of some types of neurosis, such as anxiety, shame, guilt, is being separated from another or others. In Fromm's (1956) *The Sane Society*, Fromm considered whether society as a whole displays pathological symptoms that he called "socially patterned defects" (Fromm p 15) that he believed resulted from a failure by individuals to "attain freedom, spontaneity, a genuine expression of self" (Fromm p 15). In addition to decrying the role of capitalism, Fromm discussed various features of modern society – such as the dissolving of personal privacy through compulsive talk about oneself, and the prejudice against the introverted or non-conformist. Fromm also decried the pervasiveness of a herd mentality and its impact, that being a loss or erosion of a sense of self. Another example of Fromm's view that neuroses can be held collectively is evident in Fromm (1962), a book in which Fromm applied various psychoanalytic concepts in his analysis of international relations. For instance, Fromm applied concepts such as projection, resistance and paranoia to argue that there exists some "pathological thinking"

(Fromm 1962 p 17) – such as in America’s then construal of communism, China and the Soviet Union.

How can the self diagnose these neurosis symptoms, in Fromm’s view? In his classic book *The Art of Listening*, Fromm (1994a) argued that the key to resolving neuroses lies in finding freedom through objectively examining the self, realizing its flaws, and not wrongly blaming external causes. Fromm thus suggested exploration of oneself as a way of diagnosing societal neurosis within oneself. This exploration, according to Fromm (1985), can occur through analysis of one’s behaviour. What becomes defined as a character trait is that behaviour which persists regardless of the situation and irrespective of whether it is maladaptive or adaptive. We can deduce this analysis of one’s behaviour as a way that the self, in Fromm’s view, can discover symptoms of neurosis in character traits. Fromm also suggested a critical approach to self exploration. Fromm (1976) argued that being active in the pursuit of the self can be achieved through critical reasoning – an argument very much in the tradition of the Frankfurt School. Fromm endorsed cynicism as an indicator of a well developed self, but he cautioned that “cynicism without faith is just discouragement, is just self destructive” (Fromm 1976 p 150).

What are the remedies of societal neuroses, in Fromm’s opinion? Fromm (1994a) suggested the following as ways in which one people can overcome what he called modern character neuroses: “developing an interest in the world”, “learning to think critically” (Fromm 1994a p 164), “to know oneself and to get aware of one’s unconscious” (p 169), “becoming aware of one’s body” (p 174), “to concentrate and to meditate” (p 177), “to discover one’s own narcissism” (p 180) and “analyzing one’s self” (p 188).

3c. Fromm on personality traits

Fromm (quoted in Evans, 1966) said that a key innovation of his version of psychoanalysis was an emphasis on culture and socio-structural factors. This is the other theme that runs through Fromm’s work: the idea that sociological and other types of variables should be incorporated into psychoanalysis. To illustrate this point, let us consider two examples of Fromm’s work: one an empirical study conducted in Mexico, and the other a book on human aggression.

The first example is Fromm and Maccoby’s (1970) book entitled *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, reporting research involving participants from Morelos, a state 50 miles to the south of the Mexican capital. They used a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire method similar to that used by Fromm and Weiss, in an exploration of how socio-structural factors (e.g. socioeconomic status) relate to psychological factors (e.g. “hoarding orientation”, Fromm &

Maccoby p 282). In that example, we see Fromm using sociological variables to explain psychoanalytic ones.

Another example of Fromm using variables from other subjects to explain psychoanalytic concepts is Fromm’s (1974) *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. This book is a brilliant exploration and critical evaluation of various subjects’ and paradigms’ explanations of human aggression – from ethology, anthropology, palaeontology, neurophysiology to psychoanalysis and behaviourism in psychology. Fromm’s conclusions on the reasons for destructive human behaviour essentially pointed towards personality traits as the end point of the aforementioned non-psychoanalytic variables (physiological, anthropological, etc.). Fromm analysed Stalin and Hitler (the latter in more, depth), arguing that they displayed necrophilic personality traits in multiple behaviours. Likewise, Fromm (1947) speculated on the concept of human ethics, and he put forward theories concerning human character types. For instance, Fromm postulated that some people have a ‘receptive orientation’, some an ‘exploitative orientation’, some a ‘hoarding orientation’, some a ‘marketing orientation’ and so on. In everyday situations, these personality types might only be manifest in ‘everyday’ ways, but in circumstances of social upheaval these personality types might explain killing, torturing, and other gratuitous acts during war.

It is altogether clear, from this and previous sections, that Fromm’s writings on the self and its connection with society defined most of the books that he wrote upon leaving the Frankfurt School. It is also clear from the theoretical ideas just discussed that Fromm consistently applied psychoanalysis in his explanation of societal phenomena, continuing in the tradition of critical theory that he acquired at the Frankfurt School.

4. Conclusion

Fromm contributed to the Frankfurt School’s merging of psychoanalysis with Marxist ideas. However, he had reservations about the School’s construal of psychoanalysis as an allegory, and his criticisms of Freud’s version of psychoanalysis generated animosity from those within the Frankfurt School who were adherents of Freud’s theories. Due to this and due to personality differences, tensions began to mount between Fromm and Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and others. Fromm’s lengthy absences from the School, whilst convalescing from tuberculosis, further weakened his ties with the Institute. Fromm produced a manuscript on a large-scale study of Germans, conducted just before the rise of the Nazis, that several within the Frankfurt School were critical of and that Horkheimer declined to publish. Fromm soon after resigned from the Frankfurt School. The rivalry between Fromm and Adorno never subsided and each went on to become famous intellectuals in their own right. The contentious

manuscript, never published until after Fromm's death, was a report showing that Fromm pioneered the Institute's research on the authoritarian personality as a predictor of fascism. After leaving the Frankfurt School, Fromm went on to become a bestselling author and an influential scholar. His critique of Freudian psychoanalysis became pivotal in neo-Freudians' revision of psychoanalytic theory. The Institute for Social Research relocated to Frankfurt in 1950, but some members remained in the USA. The work of the School began to exert a lot of influence in Europe and in the USA. Until now, Fromm has remained an elusive figure within the history of the Frankfurt School.

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